

pipe dream

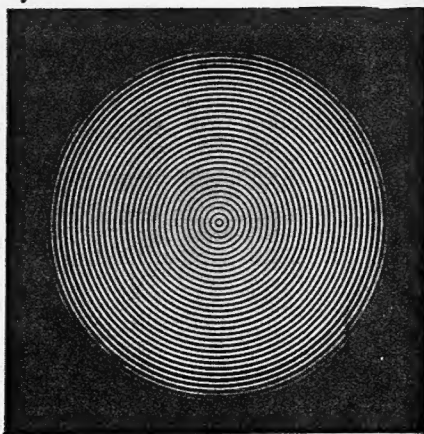
BULK RATE
U. S. Postage
Paid
Permit No. 27
VESTAL, N. Y.

Vol. No. 1, No. 4

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BINGHAMTON

Tuesday, September 22, 1970

ERS
VICE
aza



by Steve Weinberger

After asking a fourth person where to go, I finally realized I had been standing outside the right place for sometime. The doors marked Experimental Television Center looked more like an entrance to a garage than anything else, but this was where I was told Ralph Hocking would be.

Meeting Ralph Hocking is a devastating experience. At least it was for me. I kept wondering, as I searched for his office, why I chose this assignment over a review of "John Barleycorn Must Die," a story whose most important complication would be trying to find a dorm stereo that works. But it was my idea to go this profile route trying to illumine for all the life of an unusual teacher on this campus. I stepped inside and immediately tripped over cable.

The dark room looked like a Radio Shack stockroom that had just been vandalized by a family of elephants. Televisions, lights, video tape machines, cameras, wires, and other equipment were strewn all over the place. And across the room, in a corner, sat Hocking and two friends actively involved in a mid-afternoon bull session.

As the conversation continued I looked around. An old Salvation Army couch covered with Action Comics. Pictures on the wall, all kinds ranging from Hocking in military uniform to nude figure studies.

Impressive Past Revealed

Hocking turned towards me. Although sloppily dressed, with his white beard he was an imposing figure nonetheless.

"What do you want to know?" he asked.

"I'm interested in doing a story about you as a person, rather than about your work here."

He seemed unimpressed. He turned to an overstuffed filing cabinet and pulled out a two page xeroxed resume made up while he was teaching art at Allegheny College. It included everything from his expulsion from a Detroit Catholic school to his work as an ambulance driver and morgue attendant.

"What else do you want to know?"

"Well, uh," I just have said that about eight times. He was staring me down and I was fumbling. He was almost reluctant to speak about his past, and his jobs have been numerous. He could offer nothing funny about working as a tire bag moulder or airplane pusher, but said that he found all of it interesting.

I saw that my story was crumbling and I knew I had to shift the angle. Hocking was eager to speak about his work here as the director of the Experimental Television Center.

"I believe that television is a very powerful force and the ways in which it can be used are limitless. Here, if someone has an idea, we give him a camera, some tape, and let him shoot. That's all."

Hocking himself is a novice in this field and is now in the process of editing some ten hours of his own tape. Although there has been no formal presentation of any student work, Hocking says that the response to the program has been good. "The program as it stands now offers no courses, but in a few years there's no telling what might happen. Cinema is a good example. A few years ago there were no courses, but now they've set up an entire curriculum. Now, for the first time, students can get credit for work they do in television."

He feels that once courses are established they won't be geared to train people in commercial television production techniques. They will still be of an educational, experimental nature.